

Camping out between our past and God's promise.

Main Texts: Joshua 3, 5, 6

Main Point: God's plan and desire for our lives is to move us from the land of just enough to the land of more than enough!

Sermon Title: Camping out between our past and God's promise.

Introduction: When I was an older teenager (age 18-19) I was on my way to yet another mission trip to Matamoros Mexico. I had been here before and the trip was always long. We would start out in our home in Tennessee and literally drive non-stop until we arrive. Usually this would take a little more than 24 hours by bus. Our normal plan would be to drive directly to Mexico, work for a week, then on the way back to Tennessee we would take a "fun day off" at South Padre Island. That was the normal plan, but on this particular trip we did something different. We took our free day first *before* entering Mexico. We "camped out between" where we were from and where we were going.

This little island was full of nice beaches, boats, swimming pools, and theme parks. It was also the place that I was given the opportunity to bungee jump off a 300ft tall platform. I gathered my audience (my youth group) to watch me, I climbed into a small metal cage/basket, and the young man inside gave me these instructions. I will never forget them. He said, "Alright man. Here's what's going to happen. We're going to get up here. I am going to open the door. You are going to walk out on the platform. I am going to count to 3. You are going to jump. If you don't jump when I get to 3, I am going to push you off." It was at that point I realized...there was no turning back. I had reached a point of no return. I had to jump.

Today we are going to be moving around a bit in the Old Testament book of Joshua. In this book we are see a newly inaugurated leader (Joshua) leading the younger generation (Israel) into the Promised Land. Moses has passed away. The sinful generation that caused them to wander in the wilderness for 40 years is gone. And now we'll pick up in chapter 5 as they are camped out between the Jordan River and the walls of Jericho.

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Joshua 5 (Eating Produce of the Land)

¹⁰ While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho. ¹¹ And the day after the Passover, on that very day, **they ate of the produce of the land**, unleavened cakes and parched grain. ¹² And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

- They are camped out between their past and their promise.
- It was beautiful, comfortable, and full of food. But there was more that they had to do. This was not the end, but the beginning.
- This was their "South Padre Island" experience. This was a Bungee Jumping moment, and God was saying..."There's no turning back to the days of Manna."
- Like the guy in the metal basket with me in the Bungee Jump...This was God pushing them off of the "platform of their past safety and security and the provision" that they were used to having...so that they could final enter into the fullness of the PROMISE.
- So...God cut off the Manna (their past) so they could eat from the land...(their promise).
- God had more for them! He always had more for them! But it was going to take a leap of faith!! They were going to have to let go of the past to be able to embrace the future.
- But we need to back up just a bit and understand some things regarding the process that God had them in up until this point. (There are some lessons learned along the way that are important for us)

Before they got to their current camp, they had a river to get through.

After they went through the water, there was a wall they had to get over.

To achieve God's promises there will always be "things to go through/get over".

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To achieve the promise, we must go through some things together.

Joshua 3 (Passing Through The Jordan)

¹⁵ and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water ...¹⁶ the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away...and those flowing down toward the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

Explanation: The waters were at flood stage during this season. It was not a safe environment. Of course God would wait until the waters were at their worst for them to cross over. He couldn't make it easy and wait till the dry season. The Bible says it was the season of Harvest! If he had waited for the dry season...it might have been easier to cross the river, but there wouldn't be any food waiting on them on the other side! (GOD MIGHT MAKE YOU WALK THROUGH SOME ROUGH SEASONS, BUT IT IS BECAUSE HE HAS A BLESSING WAITING FOR YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE.)

They had to go through some things together to get to the promise!

Water through the Bible represents great moments of transition.

- **Creation:** The Spirit hovered over the chaos of the water and brought order.
- **The Flood:** Noah was baptized through the flood and renewed the creation.
- **The Red Sea:** The Hebrew people were baptized in the Sea as they left slavery.
- **Elijah/Elisha:** They parted the waters to transition to mantle of prophet.
- **Jesus Baptism:** He left the carpenter's house for the ministry.
- **JOSHUA/TODAY:** They are passing from their past of wandering to the promise of a land flowing with milk and honey.

Water always represents great moments of transition. God wants to transition US as well, but we need to go through some things together first.

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Illustration: In our country and culture we have always been great at drawing lines of division...especially in the church world. When I was in Bible College I had to take a class on the History of the church, and I was not happy when I learned of the racism and segregation that plagued our movements through the early and mid 1900s. As I saw how people purposefully set out to separate the people of God by skin color my heart cried! The Culture had infiltrated the church, BUT GOD CALLED US to infiltrate the culture!!! It was happening in the opposite direction.

While I am grateful for the freedoms that we enjoy in our Nation, our freedoms have given us "too much time on our hands" and we have drawn battle lines of fighting each other rather than the Devil. THIS MUST STOP. We have to come together! We cannot afford the sins of past generations keep us from becoming more like Heaven!

I had the privilege of visiting Cuba last year on a mission trip. I did not observe anything other than unity that had been forged through the fires of persecution. The church in Cuba does not have time to fight each other because they realize that they need each other to fight their real enemy...Satan! They have gone through some things together...AND THAT BRINGS UNITY.

Application: WE MUST COME TOGETHER! We have a very unique opportunity today to declare UNITY! We need to ask for the Water of God's Word to wash us and make us clean from the past! But we need to be aware that ATTACK AWAITS after the water!

- **After Creation** there was the Snake and the Fruit.
- **After the Flood** Noah fell prey to drunkenness.
- **After the Red Sea** they built a golden calf.
- **After Elisha** took the mantle he was attacked by a gang.
- **After Jesus** was baptized he faced Satan in the desert.

Any time you pass through one thing/get a victory/expect that they enemy will be right their ready to attack you another way.

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To achieve the promise, we must get over some things together.

Joshua 6 (Taking the City)

¹⁵ On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. ¹⁶ And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people,

"Shout, for the LORD has given you the city.

²⁰ So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.

Explanation: They are camping out between their past and God's promise. They are getting a little taste of the goodness of the land. They have been through 40 years of wandering because of someone else's mistake! They have been living of daily (just enough) manna for decades. They have heard about the days of God's deliverance from Egypt (10 Plagues). They had heard about passing through the Red Sea.

BUT NOW THEY NEEDED THEIR OWN MOMENT! They needed to pass through their own "Water" and have their own FAITH! And just as soon as they experience a miracle (parting the Jordan River) their was yet another obstacle facing them. They had to go through something together...now they are going to have to get over something together.

What's amazing about this account is that they participated in this miracle in ways that didn't make "human sense". How can marching and shouting and blowing trumpets knock down city walls that "REACHED TO THE SKY" (Deut. 9:1). God gave them instructions. They followed the guidelines. BUT GOD KNOCKED DOWN THE WALLS.

God is always in control of knocking down the walls...BUT THEY HAD TO GET OVER THEM.

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Illustration: As I sat in that History class learning about the mistakes of the past done by the church I made a silent commitment to the Lord that I would not let the mistakes of the past keep me from moving forward! Past generations had build large fortified walls of segregation and racial separation...BUT I SILENTLY BEGAN TO CIRCLE THOSE WALLS in my heart...marching around them and ready for them to fall.

I was not going to let the fact that past generations built walls keep me from building bridges!

So God began to work on my heart. I longed for the day when my wife and I would be a part of the solution. The walls were torn down in the spirit! But we had to GO UP AND TAKE THE CITY! WE HAD TO DO SOMETHING!

Application: We must ask ourselves...Is there anything (walls) still lingering in our heart from a previous generation's mistakes? When Moses was the leader a past generation looked at these walls and said IMPOSSIBLE. Those walls could never come down...AND THEY WANDERED FOR 40 YEARS because of it! That past generation missed their moment! They could have entered the PROMISE BACK THEN but they missed it!

Will we miss our moment? Will we look at the walls built by past generations and say THOSE OLD WALLS ARE TOO BIG FOR US? THOSE OLD WALLS WILL NEVER COME DOWN...or WILL WE SEIZE OUR MOMENT? Will we take the city!!

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Conclusion:

We had to go through something together. We needed to be purified by the Lord. We needed to get our hearts right before God. We needed to get ourselves ready for the promise!

It is not God's will for us to camp out in the in-between places. God does not want us to stop at "South Padre Island" where it is comfortable and conflict free.

He wants us to MOVE FORWARD AND TAKE THE CITY!

We need to get over some things together. If you are ready to pray with me and circle the walls of the past with prayer/praise...then stand with me...hand in hand with your brother/sister in the Lord...and LETS PRAY FOR UNITY.